Does Step Count Feedback Enhance Counseling for Weight Loss?

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Abstract

Objective: This proposal was developed at the request of, and with input from, the Research Council of the VA's National Advisory Board for Nutrition and Food Services, in an effort to address obesity, a major health problem for VA patients. The prevalence of obesity in the United States has been increasing at an alarming rate. As a result, obesity related chronic diseases such as diabetes are also increasing in prevalence. While interventions that focus only on dietary changes can result in significant weight loss, the lost weight is often rapidly regained. Physical activity, when added to a dietary weight loss program, not only increases the initial weight loss but it also can play a critical role in preventing weight regain. The primary objective of the proposed study is to test the efficacy of a low-cost, innovative weight loss program targeting lifestyle physical activity and diet in individuals with cardiovascular risk factors or disease.
Study Design and Methods: In this 3 year multi-site randomized controlled trial, we will recruit overweight and obese veterans with cardiovascular disease risk factors or known cardiovascular disease who have been referred for nutritional counseling. Research participants will be randomized to one of three study groups: (1) nutritional counseling alone; (2) nutritional counseling with simple pedometer feedback; and (3) nutritional counseling, with both simple pedometer and enhanced pedometer (web-based) feedback. Each participant will have 5 visits with a dietitian in the course of 6 months. Participants randomized to receive pedometer feedback will review objectively monitored step-count data during their nutritional counseling sessions and will use the data to set new step-count goals. The primary outcome, weight loss, will be assessed at the sixth and final session at the end of the 6-month intervention. Enhanced pedometers that can monitor step-counts throughout the day and upload time stamped step count data to a central computer will be used to monitor adherence to a walking program.